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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Agenda item 102

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/61/1)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 13 September 2006, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization under agenda item 102. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: When I first spoke to you from this podium in 1997, it seemed to me that humanity faced three great challenges. One was to ensure that globalization would benefit the human race as a whole, not just its fortunate members. Another was to heal the disorder of the post-cold-war world, replacing it with a genuinely new world order of peace and freedom as envisaged in our Charter. And the third was to protect the rights and dignity of individuals, particularly women, which were often widely trampled underfoot.

As the second African to serve as Secretary-General, I felt that all three of these challenges — the security challenge, the development challenge and the challenge of human rights and the rule of law — concerned me directly. Africa was in great danger of being excluded from the benefits of globalization — indeed, of being left to rot on the margins of the world economy. Africa was also the scene of some of the most protracted and brutal conflicts. And many of Africa's people felt they were unjustly condemned to be exploited and oppressed, generation after generation, since colonial rule had been replaced by an inequitable economic order on the global level, and sometimes by corrupt rulers and warlords at the local level.

In the decade since then, many people have been struggling to confront these three global challenges. Much has been achieved, but events have also presented us with new challenges — or rather, have given the old ones new form or a sharper bite.

In the economic arena, both globalization and growth have continued apace. Some developing countries, notably in Asia, have played a major role in this growth. Many millions of their people have thereby been released from the prison of perpetual poverty. Meanwhile, at the level of development policy, the debate has advanced, moving from rival models to agreed targets. And now the world has recognized HIV/AIDS as a major challenge to development and begun to confront it. I am proud of the role the United Nations has played in this. Development and the Millennium Development Goals now take pride of place in all our work.

But let us not delude ourselves. The Asian miracle is yet to be replicated in other parts of the world. And even within the most dynamic Asian countries, its benefits are far from equally shared. By the same token, the Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved everywhere by 2015. True,

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in many developing countries there is now a much better understanding of what good governance is and why it is important. But many still fall short of it in practice. True, there is progress on debt relief, as well as encouraging promises on aid and investment. But the "global partnership for development" is still more a phrase than fact — especially in the all-important area of trade.

My friends, globalization is not a tide that lifts all boats. Even among those who statistics tell us are benefiting, many feel deeply insecure and strongly resent the apparent complacency of those more fortunate than themselves. So globalization, which in theory brings us all closer together, in practice risks dividing us and driving us further apart.

Are we any more secure against the second challenge — the ravages of war? Again, some statistics would tell us so. There are fewer inter-State conflicts than there used to be; and many civil wars have ended. Here, too, I am proud of the role the United Nations has played. And I am proud of what my fellow Africans have achieved in ending many of the conflicts that disfigured our continent. But here, too, we should be under no illusion. In far too many parts of the world — especially the developing world — people are still exposed to brutal conflicts, fought with small but deadly weapons. And people in all parts of the world are threatened — though some are more aware of it than others — by the spread of weapons of mass destruction. It is shameful that last year's Summit Outcome does not contain even one word about non-proliferation and disarmament — basically because States could not agree which of the two should be given priority. It is high time to end this dispute and tackle both tasks with the urgency they demand.

Moreover, just as some who benefit from globalization may feel threatened by it, so, many who are statistically safer from conflict do not feel safe. For that, we have terrorism to thank. It kills and maims relatively few people, compared to other forms of violence and conflict. But it spreads fear and insecurity, and that in turn drives people to huddle together with those who share their beliefs or their way of life, while shunning those who appear alien. Thus, at the very time when international migration has brought millions of people of different creeds or cultures to live as fellow citizens, the misconceptions and stereotypes underlying the idea of a clash of civilizations have come to be more and more widely shared. Insensitivity towards other people's beliefs or sacred symbols — intentional or otherwise — is seized on by those who seem eager to foment a new war of religion, this time on a global scale.

Moreover, this climate of fear and suspicion is constantly refuelled by the violence in the Middle East. We might like to think of the Arab-Israeli conflict as just one regional conflict among many. But it is not. No other conflict carries such a powerful symbolic and emotional charge among people far removed from the battlefield. As long as the Palestinians live under occupation, exposed to daily frustration and humiliation; and as long as Israelis are blown up in buses or in dance halls: so long will passions everywhere be inflamed.

On one side, supporters of Israel feel that it is harshly judged, by standards that are not applied to its enemies. Too often that is true, particularly in some United Nations bodies. On the other side, people are outraged by the disproportionate use of force against Palestinians and by Israel's continued occupation and confiscation of Arab land.

As long as the Security Council is unable to end this conflict, and the now nearly 40-year-old occupation, by bringing both sides to accept and implement its resolutions, so long will respect for the United Nations continue to decline. So long, too, will our impartiality be questioned. So long will our best efforts to resolve other conflicts be resisted, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan, whose peoples need our help just as badly, and are entitled to it. And so long will our devoted and courageous staff, instead of being protected by the blue flag, find themselves exposed to rage and violence, provoked by policies they neither control nor support.

But what about the third great challenge facing humanity, the challenge of the rule of law and our rights and dignity as human beings? Here, too, there has been significant progress. More rights have been enshrined in international treaties — and the Assembly is now about to codify the rights of a group who particularly need it, people who suffer from handicaps and disabilities. More Governments today are elected by, and accountable to, those whom they govern. Humankind has actually brought to justice some of those who committed the most heinous crimes against it. And the Assembly, meeting last year at the highest level, solemnly proclaimed the responsibility of each

individual State in the first instance, but ultimately of the whole international community acting through the United Nations, to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

And yet. And yet. Every day, reports reach us of new laws broken and of new bestial crimes to which individuals and minority groups are subjected. Even the necessary and legitimate struggle around the world against terrorism is used as a pretext to abridge or abrogate fundamental human rights, thereby ceding more moral ground to the terrorists and helping them find new recruits. Sadly, once again, the biggest challenge comes from Africa — from Darfur, where the continued spectacle of men, women and children driven from their homes by murder, rape and the burning of their villages makes a mockery of our claim, as an international community, to shield people from the worst abuses.

In short, the events of the last 10 years have not resolved, but sharpened, the three great challenges I spoke of: an unjust world economy, world disorder and widespread contempt for human rights and the rule of law. As a result, we face a world whose divisions threaten the very notion of an international community, upon which this institution stands. And this is happening at the very time when, more than ever before, human beings throughout the world form a single society. So many of the challenges we face are global. They demand a response in which all peoples must play their part.

I deliberately say "all peoples", echoing the preamble of our Charter, and not "all States". It was clear to me 10 years ago, and is even clearer now, that international relations are not a matter of States alone. They are relations between peoples, in which so-called non-State actors play a vital role and can make a vital contribution. All must play their part in a true multilateral world order, with a renewed and dynamic United Nations at its centre.

Yes, I remain convinced that the only answer to this divided world must be a truly United Nations. Climate change, HIV/AIDS, fair trade, migration, human rights — all those issues, and many more, bring us back to that point. Addressing each is indispensable for each of us in our village, in our neighbourhood and in our country. Yet each has acquired a global dimension that can only be reached by global action, agreed and coordinated through this most universal of institutions.

What matters is that the strong, as well as the weak, agree to be bound by the same rules, to treat each other with the same respect. What matters is that all peoples accept the need to listen, to compromise and to take each other's views into account. What matters is that they come together, not at cross purposes but with a common purpose — a common purpose to shape their common destiny. And that can only happen if peoples are bound together by something more than just a global market, or even a set of global rules.

Each of us must share the pain of all who suffer and the joy of all who hope, wherever in the world they may live. Each of us must earn the trust of his fellow men and women, no matter what their race, colour or creed, and learn to trust them in turn. That is what the founders of this Organization believed in. It is what I believe in. It is what the vast majority of people in this world want to believe in. And that is what has spurred the reforms and new ideas of the United Nations over this last frenetic decade. From peacekeeping to peacebuilding, from human rights to development and humanitarian relief, I have been lucky enough to preside over the Secretariat — and its wonderful, devoted staff — at a time when Members' ambitions for the Organization have sometimes seemed limitless, although their pocket books less so.

These last few weeks especially, as I travelled through the Middle East, I saw again the legitimacy and the reach of the United Nations. Its indispensable role in securing the peace in Lebanon has reminded us all how powerful this Organization can be when everyone wants it to succeed.

This is the last time I shall have the honour of presenting my annual report to the Assembly. Let me conclude by thanking you all for allowing me to serve as Secretary-General during this remarkable decade. Together we have pushed some big rocks to the top of the mountain, even if others have slipped from our grasp and rolled back. But this mountain, with its bracing winds and global views, is the best place on Earth to be. It has been difficult and challenging, but at times thrillingly rewarding. And while I look forward to resting my shoulder from those stubborn rocks in the next phase of my life, I know I shall miss the mountain. Yes, I shall miss what is, when all is said

and done, the world's most exalting job. I yield my place to others with a real obstinate feeling of hope for our common future.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, the General Assembly starts its annual general debate. During the next two weeks, world leaders will address the most pressing issues and challenges facing their respective nations and peoples. We face global change that is unprecedented in its speed, scope and scale. We are all increasingly exposed to sharp social and economic inequalities that take on new dimensions. We live in a world afflicted by violence and armed conflicts, hunger and disease; a world threatened by international terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of all types of weapons; a world brought closer together by the forces of globalization, yet divided by ethnic strife and a growing technological gap and mistrust; a world where the enjoyment of all human rights is still an unrealized dream for millions of people. We, the Member States, have a moral duty to reach practical solutions to our mutual concerns.

I welcome you all to this historic General Assembly, all the heads of State who came to participate in the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Your participation in this session is an expression of your dedication and commitment to the United Nations and to the principles of multilateralism. Last year at the 2005 World Summit, you reached a consensus on a wide range of far-reaching measures to enhance the collective response of the international community to the challenges of today's world.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson. Under his leadership, this Assembly was able to fulfil many of the commitments you agreed to in 2005. I would also like to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General for his farsighted vision, leadership and dedication to the principles and values of the United Nations.

Now the challenge before us is to ensure that our decisions make a more lasting difference in the lives of millions of people around the world. In particular, our efforts must focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. In the face of increased poverty, especially in developing countries, we must all rally to ensure the effective implementation of our global development agenda, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. In his recent report on the work of this Organization, the Secretary-General noted: "If history judges 2005 for its promises, then 2006 must be judged on implementation" (*A/61/1, para. 27*).

Hence, we shall continue to make development the central goal of the general framework of the United Nations, with sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects, the key elements of this framework. This is our common responsibility, upon which rests the credibility of the United Nations. As you are aware, the Assembly has accepted to focus its general debate on the theme "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development". We have to examine the practical measures and strategies that can enable us to make consistent progress and build on previous international and national efforts. This will be critical in our quest to achieve the progress we all seek in the sixty-first session and beyond.

Just a few days ago we held the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. Both meetings revealed the potential and opportunities that globalization presents as a force for improving the lives of millions of people.

Making our world a more secure place requires the United Nations to take a more proactive role when addressing the many armed conflicts within and between States. We need to make further progress in the area of conflict prevention. It is imperative that we have a high-level debate that can deliver an actionable outcome to this issue. In the same vein, we need to address specific potential causes of tension in our world, notably in the field of disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. With the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, we have made a historic step forward. We now need to work towards its effective implementation. Meanwhile, we should redouble our efforts towards reaching consensus on the most needed and long-overdue Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Regarding institutional reform, we need to complete the outstanding commitments from the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), such as the strengthening of the Economic and Social

Council, Security Council reform and the strengthening of the Organization and the streamlining of its management. I also look forward to reviewing the Secretary-General's recommendations, as well as the important contributions that Member States will add to the debate on system-wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. In this process, the voices of civil society and the private sector, if well channelled, can constitute a valuable asset in our work.

There is no perfect world, and the United Nations is a reflection of our world. If we remain committed to multilateralism, the values and principles enshrined in the Charter will strengthen our resolve to overcome the challenges and threats ahead of us and bring about a safer and more prosperous world for all.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to remind members that the list of speakers has been created on the basis that speakers will have a time limit of 15 minutes per statement. Within that given time frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly.

I should also like to draw the General Assembly's attention to the decision taken by the Assembly at previous sessions, namely that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, I should like to invite speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, to exit the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the sixty-first session?

It was so decided.

Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Da Silva (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): When I first addressed the Assembly from this rostrum, in 2003, I stressed the need for urgent and relentless action to fight the scourge of hunger and poverty in the world. This is what we are doing in Brazil: we have combined economic stability with social inclusion policies; the standard of living of Brazilians has improved; employment and income have grown; the purchasing power of the minimum wage has increased. Our resources are scarce, but even so we have achieved surprising results.

The family stipend at the core of our zero-hunger programme assures a basic income to over 11 million Brazilian families. Well-fed people can enhance their dignity, their health and their learning capacity. Putting resources into social programmes is not expenditure; it is investment.

If we in Brazil have done so much with so little, imagine what could have been done on a global scale if the fight against hunger and poverty had been a real priority for the international community. Where there is hunger, there is no hope; there is only desolation and pain. Hunger nurtures violence and fanaticism. A world where people starve will never be safe.

The sheer size of the task will not daunt us, especially if we are not alone. All here know that some 840 million human beings — nearly one out of seven on the planet — do not have enough to eat.

An additional $50 billion each year are needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals on time. The international community can afford it. On the positive side, think, just for instance, of the hundreds of billions of dollars invested to move forward with the full integration of Eastern European countries into the European Union. Then, on the other hand, think of the cost of wars and other conflicts. Everyone here is aware that the second Gulf war has probably cost hundreds of billions of dollars to date. With much less

we could change the sad reality of a large portion of the world's population. We could alleviate the plight of those people and lift them out of destitution. We could save millions of lives.

However strong they are today, rich countries should have no illusions: nobody is safe in a world of injustice. War will never bring security; it can only generate horrors, bitterness, intolerance and fundamentalism and create damage associated with hegemonism. The poor must be given reasons to live, not to kill or die. Humanity's greatness lies not in bellicosity but in humanism, and there can be no true humanism without respect for the other.

There are, in fact, those who are different from us, but who are no less dignified, no less precious and no less entitled to the right to happiness, because we are all creatures of the same creator.

There can be security only in a world where all have the right to economic and social development. The true path to peace is shared development. If we do not want war to go global, justice must go global.

That is why, with the serene conviction of a man who has dedicated his life to fighting peacefully for the rights of working people, I say to the Assembly: the search for a new, fairer and more democratic world order is not only in the interests of poor or emerging nations; it is also — and perhaps to an even greater extent — in the interests of rich countries, so long as they have eyes to see and ears to hear, so long as they do not make the mistake of ignoring the haunting cry of the excluded.

We have seen some progress in the past few years. At the Summit of World Leaders in 2004, we launched the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative. Together, we were able to achieve strong international engagement around that issue. Our collective efforts have begun to bear fruit. We are establishing innovative mechanisms, such as a solidarity levy on international air tickets.

Hunger and disease walk hand in hand. Therefore, we have joined with other Governments in establishing an International Drug Purchase Facility to combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. That initiative will provide new sources of funding and facilitate access to medication at lower costs. We cannot shirk our responsibilities in this area.

That is why I salute the leaders of vision who are engaged in this war: the war against the debasement of human beings and against hopelessness. That is the only war in which final victory will mean a triumph for all of humanity.

The fight against hunger and poverty is based on the creation of a world order that gives priority to social and economic development. There will be permanent solutions to destitution only when poorer countries can make progress through their own efforts.

Once international trade is free and fair, it will be a valuable tool for wealth creation, income distribution and job creation. It is essential that we break the bonds of protectionism. Subsidies granted by richer countries, particularly in the area of agriculture, are oppressive shackles that limit progress and doom poor countries to backwardness. Time and again, I must repeat that, while trade-distorting support in developed countries amount to the outrageous sum of $1 billion a day, 900 million people get by on less than $1 a day in poor and developing countries. That situation is politically and morally untenable.

The only thing worse than inaction stemming from ignorance is neglect born of accommodation. The old geography of international trade must be profoundly reshaped. Brazil, together with its partners in the Group of Twenty (G-20), is engaged in that task. The creation of the G-20 has changed the dynamics of negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO): until recently, developing countries played only peripheral roles in the most important negotiations.

Eliminating the barriers that prevent poor countries from developing is an ethical duty of the international community. It is also the best way to ensure prosperity and security for all.

Today, for the first time in the history of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/WTO system, the word "development" appears in the title of a round of trade negotiations. However, the Doha Development Agenda, which will decide the future of the world trade system, is now in crisis.

If they are successful, the WTO negotiations will help to pull many people out of extreme poverty. Farmers who cannot compete against multi-billion-dollar subsidies will at last have a chance to prosper. Poor African countries will finally be able to export their products. If the round fails, however, the fallout

will extend far beyond trade. The credibility of the WTO system itself will be jeopardized, with negative political and social repercussions. Scourges such as organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism will find fertile ground in which to proliferate.

I have called on world leaders to shoulder their responsibilities. The importance attached to this issue at the most recent summit of the Group of Eight has not yet produced practical results. Our generation has a unique opportunity to show the world that selfish interests will not prevail over the common good. History will not forgive us if we miss that opportunity. Fair trade, based on a solid consensus and on a transparent WTO that is aware of the needs of developing countries, is one of the pillars of the world order that we uphold.

In the field of international peace and security, another such pillar is the United Nations. Brazil is a staunch supporter of international organizations as forums for cooperation and dialogue. There is no more effective way to bring States together, to keep the peace, to protect human rights, to promote sustainable development and to work out negotiated solutions to common problems.

Conflicts such as that in the Middle East continue to challenge the authority of the United Nations. The recent crisis in Lebanon exposed the Organization to a dangerous erosion of credibility. The effectiveness of the United Nations is being seriously questioned. Unable to act when it is needed, the Security Council is accused of being lethargic.

World public opinion is impatient in the face of such incomprehensible difficulties. The deaths of innocent civilians — including women and children — have shocked all of us. In Brazil, millions of Arabs and Jews live together in harmony. Thus, Brazil's interest in the Middle East stems from a profound objective social reality in our own country.

Apart from the countries directly involved, Middle Eastern issues have always been addressed exclusively by the major Powers. So far, they have found no solution. Thus, we might ask: is it not time to convene a broad-based conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of countries of the region and others that could make a contribution on the basis of their successful experiences in living peacefully despite differences?

Brazil believes in dialogue. For that reason, we held a summit of South American and Arab countries in 2005. We also have good relations with Israel, whose birth as a State came about when a Brazilian, Oswaldo Aranha, was the President of the General Assembly. Conflicts among nations are not resolved only with money and weapons; ideas, values and feelings also have their place, particularly when they are based on real-life experiences.

More than ever before, the authority of the United Nations needs to be strengthened. We have already made significant progress through the administrative reform process and the establishment of both the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. But the task will remain irreparably incomplete without changes in the Security Council, the body responsible for overseeing issues related to peace.

Together with the other members of the Group of Four on Security Council reform, Brazil believes that any expansion of the Council must envisage the admission of developing countries as permanent members. That would make the Council more democratic, legitimate and representative. The great majority of Member States agree with that view and recognize the urgency of this matter.

We cannot deal with new problems using outdated structures. Sooner or later, we must open the way to democratizing international decision-making bodies. As the Secretary-General has said, we travel around the world preaching democracy to others; we must now apply democracy to ourselves and show that there is genuine representation in the political bodies of the United Nations.

South America is a priority for Brazilian foreign policy. Our region is our home. We are expanding the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and strengthening the South American Community of Nations. The future of Brazil is linked to that of its neighbours. A strong and united South America will contribute to the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We also feel connected to the African continent by historical and cultural ties. As the country with the second-largest black population in the world, we are committed to sharing Africa's challenges and its destiny. But regional matters are only part of the global problems we face.

The fight against hunger and poverty, the breakdown of the Doha round and the stalemate in the Middle East are interconnected issues. The appropriate handling of these matters requires trust in negotiated solutions at the multilateral level.

This trust has now been shaken. This is extremely serious. The world order that it is our task to build must be based on justice and respect for international law. That is the only way to achieve peace, development and genuine democratic coexistence within the community of nations.

There is no lack of resources. What is missing is the political will to use them where they can make a difference. They can then turn despair into joy and find a reason to live.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bush: I am grateful for the privilege of speaking to the General Assembly.

Last week, America and the world marked the fifth anniversary of the attacks that filled another September morning with death and suffering. On that terrible day, extremists killed nearly 3,000 innocent people, including citizens of dozens of nations represented right here in this Hall. Since then, the enemies of humanity have continued their campaign of murder. Al-Qaida and those inspired by its extremist ideology have attacked more than two dozen nations. And recently, a different group of extremists deliberately provoked a terrible conflict in Lebanon. At the start of the twenty-first century, it is clear that the world is engaged in a great ideological struggle between extremists who use terror as a weapon to create fear and moderate people who work for peace.

Five years ago, I stood at this rostrum and called on the community of nations to defend civilization and build a more hopeful future. This is still the great challenge of our time. It is the calling of our generation. This morning, I want to speak about the more hopeful world that is within our reach — a world beyond terror, where ordinary men and women are free to determine their own destiny, where the voices of moderation are empowered and where the extremists are marginalized by the peaceful majority. This world can be ours if we seek it and if we work together.

The principles of this world beyond terror can be found in the very first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document declares that the "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [are] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". One of the authors of this document was a Lebanese diplomat named Charles Malik, who would go on to become President of this Assembly. Mr. Malik insisted that these principles apply equally to all people, of all religions, in all regions — including the men and women of the Arab world that was his home.

In the nearly six decades since that document was approved, we have seen the forces of freedom and moderation transform entire continents. Sixty years after a terrible war, Europe is now whole, free and at peace, and Asia has seen freedom progress and hundreds of millions of people lifted out of desperate poverty. The words of the Universal Declaration are as true today as they were when they were written. As liberty flourishes, nations grow in tolerance, and hope, and peace. And we are seeing the bright future begin to take root in the broader Middle East.

Some of the changes in the Middle East have been dramatic, and we see the results in this Hall. Five years ago, Afghanistan was ruled by the brutal Taliban regime, and its seat in this body was contested. Now this seat is held by the freely elected Government of Afghanistan, which is represented today by President Karzai. Five years ago, Iraq's seat in this body was

held by a dictator who killed his citizens, invaded his neighbours and showed his contempt for the world by defying more than a dozen Security Council resolutions. Now Iraq's seat is held by a democratic Government that embodies the aspirations of the Iraqi people, represented today by President Talabani. With these changes, more than 50 million people have been given a voice in this Hall for the first time in decades.

Some of the changes in the Middle East are happening gradually, but they are real. Algeria has held its first competitive presidential election, and the military remained neutral. The United Arab Emirates recently announced that half of its seats in the Federal National Council will be chosen by elections. Kuwait held elections in which women were allowed to vote and run for office for the first time. Citizens have voted in municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, in parliamentary elections in Jordan and Bahrain and in multiparty presidential elections in Yemen and in Egypt. These are important steps, and the Governments should continue to move forward with other reforms that show that they trust their people. Every nation that travels the road to freedom moves at a different pace, and the democracies they build will reflect their own cultures and traditions. But the destination is the same: a free society where people live at peace with each other and at peace with the world.

Some have argued that the democratic changes we are seeing in the Middle East are destabilizing the region. This argument rests on a false assumption: that the Middle East was stable to begin with. The reality is that the stability we thought we saw in the Middle East was a mirage. For decades, millions of men and women in the region have been trapped in oppression and hopelessness. And these conditions left a generation disillusioned and made this region a breeding ground for extremism.

Imagine what it is like to be a young person living in a country that is not moving toward reform. You are 21 years old, and while your peers in other parts of the world are casting their ballots for the first time, you are powerless to change the course of your Government. While your peers in other parts of the world have received educations that prepare them for the opportunities of a global economy, you have been fed propaganda and conspiracy theories that blame others for your country's shortcomings. And everywhere you turn, you hear extremists who tell you that you can escape your misery and regain your dignity through violence and terror and martyrdom. For many across the broader Middle East, this is the dismal choice presented every day.

Every civilized nation, including those in the Muslim world, must support those in the region who are offering a more hopeful alternative. We know that when people have a voice in their future they are less likely to blow themselves up in suicide attacks. We know that when leaders are accountable to their people, they are more likely to seek national greatness in the achievements of their citizens, rather than in terror and conquest. So we must stand with democratic leaders and moderate reformers across the broader Middle East. We must give voice to the hopes of decent men and women who want for their children the same things we want for ours. We must seek stability through a free and just Middle East where the extremists are marginalized by millions of citizens in control of their own destinies.

Today, I would like to speak directly to the people across the broader Middle East. My country desires peace. Extremists in your midst spread propaganda claiming that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. This propaganda is false, and its purpose is to confuse you and justify acts of terror. We respect Islam, but we will protect our people from those who pervert Islam to sow death and destruction. Our goal is to help you build a more tolerant and hopeful society that honours people of all faiths and promotes peace.

To the people of Iraq: nearly 12 million of you braved the car bombers and assassins last December to vote in free elections. The world saw you hold up purple ink-stained fingers, and your courage filled us with admiration. You have stood firm in the face of horrendous acts of terror and sectarian violence, and we will not abandon you in your struggle to build a free nation. America and our coalition partners will continue to stand with the democratic Government you elected. We will continue to help you secure the international assistance and investment you need to create jobs and opportunity, working with the United Nations and through the International Compact with Iraq endorsed here in New York yesterday. We will continue to train those of you who stepped forward to fight the enemies of freedom. We will not yield the future of your country to terrorists and extremists. In return, your leaders must rise to the challenges your country is facing and make difficult choices to bring security and prosperity. Working together, we will help

your democracy succeed, so that it can become a beacon of hope for millions in the Muslim world.

To the people of Afghanistan: together, we overthrew the Taliban regime that brought misery into your lives and harboured terrorists who brought death to the citizens of many nations. Since then, we have watched you choose your leaders in free elections and build a democratic Government. You can be proud of these achievements. We respect your courage and your determination to live in peace and freedom. We will continue to stand with you to defend your democratic gains.

Today, forces from more than 40 countries, including members of the NATO alliance, are bravely serving side by side with you against the extremists who want to bring down the free Government you have established. We will help you defeat these enemies and build a free Afghanistan that will never again oppress you or be a safe haven for terrorists.

To the people of Lebanon: last year, you inspired the world when you came out into the streets to demand your independence from Syrian dominance. You drove Syrian forces from your country and you re-established democracy. Since then, you have been tested by the fighting that began with Hizbollah's unprovoked attacks on Israel. Many of you have seen your homes and your communities caught in crossfire. We see your suffering, and the world is helping you to rebuild your country and helping you deal with the armed extremists who are undermining your democracy by acting as a State within a State.

The United Nations has passed a good resolution that has authorized an international force, led by France and Italy, to help you restore Lebanese sovereignty over Lebanese soil. For many years, Lebanon was a model of democracy and pluralism and openness in the region — and it will be again.

To the people of Iran: the United States respects you. We respect your country. We admire your rich history, your vibrant culture and your many contributions to civilization. You deserve an opportunity to determine your own future, an economy that rewards your intelligence and your talents and a society that allows you to fulfil your tremendous potential. The greatest obstacle to this future is that your rulers have chosen to deny you liberty and to use your nation's resources to fund terrorism, and fuel extremism, and pursue nuclear weapons.

The United Nations has passed a clear resolution requiring that the regime in Tehran meet its international obligations. Iran must abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions. Despite what the regime tells you, we have no objection to Iran's pursuit of a truly peaceful nuclear power programme. We are working toward a diplomatic solution to this crisis, and as we do, we look to the day when you can live in freedom and America and Iran can be good friends and close partners in the cause of peace.

To the people of Syria: your land is home to a great people with a proud tradition of learning and commerce. Today your rulers have allowed your country to become a crossroad for terrorism. In your midst, Hamas and Hizbollah are working to destabilize the region, and your Government is turning your country into a tool of Iran. This is increasing your country's isolation from the world. Your Government must choose a better way forward by ending its support for terror, and living in peace with your neighbours, and opening the way to a better life for you and your families.

To the people of Darfur: you have suffered unspeakable violence, and my nation has called these atrocities what they are: genocide. For the last two years, America joined with the international community to provide emergency food aid and support for an African Union peacekeeping force. Yet your suffering continues. The world must step forward to provide additional humanitarian aid, and we must strengthen the African Union force that has done good work but is not strong enough to protect you. The Security Council has approved a resolution that would transform the African Union force into a blue-helmeted force that is larger and more robust. To increase its strength and effectiveness, NATO nations should provide logistics and other support. The regime in Khartoum is stopping the deployment of this force. If the Sudanese Government does not approve this peacekeeping force quickly, the United Nations must act. Your lives and the credibility of the United Nations are at stake. So today I am announcing that I am naming a presidential Special Envoy — former Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Andrew Natsios — to lead America's efforts to resolve the outstanding disputes and help bring peace to your land.

The world must also stand up for peace in the Holy Land. I am committed to two democratic States,

Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. I am committed to a Palestinian State that has territorial integrity and will live peacefully with the Jewish State of Israel. This is the vision set forth in the road map, and helping the parties to reach this goal is one of the great objectives of my presidency. The Palestinian people have suffered from decades of corruption and violence and the daily humiliation of occupation. Israeli citizens have endured brutal acts of terrorism and constant fear of attack since the birth of their nation. Many brave men and women have made the commitment to peace. Yet extremists in the region are stirring up hatred and trying to prevent these moderate voices from prevailing.

This struggle is unfolding in the Palestinian territories. Earlier this year, the Palestinian people voted in a free election. The leaders of Hamas campaigned on a platform of ending corruption and improving the lives of the Palestinian people, and they prevailed. The world is waiting to see whether the Hamas Government will follow through on its promises or pursue an extremist agenda. The world has sent a clear message to the leaders of Hamas: serve the interests of the Palestinian people, abandon terror, recognize Israel's right to exist, honour agreements and work for peace.

President Abbas is committed to peace and to his people's aspirations for a State of their own. Prime Minister Olmert is committed to peace, and has said he intends to meet with President Abbas to make real progress on the outstanding issues between them. I believe that peace can be achieved and that a democratic Palestinian State is possible. I hear from leaders in the region who want to help. I have directed Secretary of State Rice to lead a diplomatic effort to engage moderate leaders across the region to help the Palestinians reform their security services and support Israeli and Palestinian leaders in their efforts to come together to resolve their differences.

Prime Minister Blair has indicated that his country will work with partners in Europe to help strengthen the governing institutions of the Palestinian administration. We welcome his initiative. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt have made clear that they are willing to contribute the diplomatic and financial assistance necessary to help these efforts succeed. I am optimistic that, by supporting the forces of democracy and moderation, we can help Israelis and Palestinians build a more hopeful future and achieve the peace in the Holy Land that we all want.

Freedom, by its nature, cannot be imposed; it must be chosen. From Beirut to Baghdad, people are making the choice for freedom. And the nations gathered in this Hall must make a choice as well. Will we support the moderates and reformers who are working for change across the Middle East, or will we yield the future to the terrorists and extremists? America has made its choice: we will stand with the moderates and reformers.

Recently, a courageous group of Arab and Muslim intellectuals wrote me a letter. In it, they said this: "The shore of reform is the only one on which any lights appear, even though the journey demands courage, patience and perseverance". The United Nations was created to make that journey possible. Together we must support the dreams of good and decent people who are working to transform a troubled region. And by doing so, we will advance the high ideals on which this institution was founded.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: Once again, we have convened at this seat of the Organization of the peoples of the world, representing the whole of humanity and coming from all corners of the world. Our pilgrimage this year is tinged with sadness, because we are also paying

homage to one of the most outstanding servants of the United Nations, a native son of Africa, Kofi Annan, whose term of office will soon come to an end.

The Group of 77 and China, as well as my own country, South Africa, sincerely thanks the Secretary-General for the selfless and dedicated work he carried out during one of the most challenging periods in the history of this Organization. In the midst of increasing poverty and underdevelopment during an era of unprecedented wealth accumulation and technological advances, and as the river that divides the rich and the poor zones of the metaphorical global village ever widened, the Secretary-General never lost focus on the imperatives of our time.

We thank him for never losing sight of the fact that poverty and underdevelopment remain the biggest threats to the progress that has been achieved, and that equality among nations big and small is central to the survival, relevance and credibility of this global Organization.

We are only six years into the twenty-first century. Those who populate the poorest of the regions of the world — that is, Africa — have boldly declared that it will be an African century. It is a century that billions of citizens of the developing world and other poor and marginalized people want to transform into a century for all humanity.

If the wishes of the majority of the world could turn into reality, this would be a century free of wars, free of internecine conflicts, free of hunger, free of preventable disease, free of want, free of environmental degradation and free of greed and corruption. Indeed, we began the century with great hopes for a better, peaceful and more humane world.

Together, we crafted comprehensive plans and bold declarations to defeat the scourge of poverty and underdevelopment. Together, we committed ourselves, with what seemed like renewed vigour, to transform the United Nations to reflect the modern reality that is defined by free, sovereign and equal nations.

However, six years into the twenty-first century, dispassionate observers might well challenge us to achieve our noble and lofty objectives, pointing to the terrorists' acts that welcomed us into the new century. They might emphasize the unilateralism that threatens to negate the democratic advances of the last decades of the twentieth century and draw attention to renewed conflicts and wars that seem to compete with the destructive fury of the conflicts of the last century.

They would remind us that for a decade and more, some of the developed nations have consistently refused to implement the outcomes and agreements of this world body that would help to alleviate the wretchedness of the poor. Thus, Madam President, when you correctly urge us to implement a global partnership for development, we, the members of the Group of 77 and China, who represent the poor people of the world, understand you to be communicating a message that we should give substance to the common commitments we solemnly made at this supreme Organization of the nations of the world.

Yet, this common commitment for a global partnership for development cannot be transformed into reality when the rich and powerful insist on an unequal relationship with the poor. A global partnership for development is impossible in the absence of a pact of mutual responsibility between the giver and the recipient. It is impossible when the rich unilaterally demand the right to set the agenda and conditions for the implementation of commonly agreed programmes.

We who represent the poor know as a matter of fact that these billions of poor people are increasingly becoming impatient, because every year they hear us adopt declaration after declaration and yet nothing practical is done to assuage the hunger pains that keep them awake at night. Only few and selected agreements are implemented, with outcomes that are clearly insufficient to alleviate the excruciating pain of their children who cannot cry anymore because to do so is to invite more pain.

Those of us who were at the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana heard this message very clearly emanating from all the countries and organizations that spoke. Those who are capable of listening should take note of what that great son of India and South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi, said on this matter:

> "The test of friendship is assistance in adversity, and that too, unconditional assistance. Cooperation which needs consideration is a commercial contract and not friendship. Conditional cooperation is like adulterated cement which does not bind."

Precisely because of the absence of a global partnership for development, the Doha Development Round has almost collapsed. Indeed, because the rich implicitly invoked the slogan of an over-confident European political party of the 1960s, and directed this uncaring declaration to the poor of today — "I'm alright, Jack!" — we have not implemented the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, thus making it difficult for the majority of the developing countries, especially those in Africa, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and we have reduced the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to an insignificant, and perhaps forgotten, piece of paper.

Part of the problem with this unequal relationship is the imposition of conditions on developing countries and the constant shifting of the goalposts, whenever the poor adhere to each and every one of those conditions.

Among other things, we have recently seen an outbreak of great social instability across Europe and other reactions of the poor to their miserable conditions in different parts of the world, which calls into question the image of a seemingly harmonious well-woven tapestry of diverse groups, because we continue to fail to implement our own decisions as taken at the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Those who coined the slogan: "I'm alright, Jack!" were communicating, whether consciously or not, a message and an attitude that said "I don't care about my neighbour as long as my family and I eat well and sleep peacefully" and that "It is not my responsibility to ensure that my poor neighbour also eats well and sleeps peacefully."

Today, the attitude among some of the rich also communicates the same message to the rest of the world, namely, "I'm alright, Jack!", even when they are acutely aware that many in their neighbourhood are dying from hunger, preventable diseases and abject poverty.

This happens also in the cruelly ironic situation where resources flow from those who have little to those who have plenty. Although the rich and powerful know the miserable life circumstances of the poor and have solemnly committed themselves to the collective effort to reverse those conditions, their attitude and response resembles that of the Biblical Cain, who, after he killed his brother, Abel, and the Lord asked him "Where is Abel, your brother?", replied: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Perhaps, all of us, especially the rich, should heed the words of one of the great sons of the United States of America, who perished because of his belief in equality and justice for all human beings and whose civil rights movement is currently marking its golden jubilee. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that

> "As long as there is poverty in the world I can never be rich, even if I have a billion dollars. As long as diseases are rampant and millions of people in this world cannot expect to live more than 28 or 30 years, I can never be totally healthy even if I just got a good check-up at the Mayo Clinic. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the way our world is made. No individual or nation can stand out boasting of being independent. We are interdependent."

The majority of the human race is entitled to ask the question whether the rich respond the way they do because further impoverishment of the poor is to the advantage of the rich, giving meaning to the old observation that the rich get richer as the poor get poorer. As the divide between the rich and the poor widens and becomes a serious global crisis, we see an increase in the concentration of economic, military, technological, media and other power.

Something is seriously wrong when people risk life and limb travelling in suffocating containers to Western Europe in search of a better life. Something is wrong when many Africans traverse, on foot, the harsh, hot and hostile Sahara Desert to reach European shores. Something is wrong when walls are built to prevent poor neighbours from entering those countries where they seek better opportunities. Something is indeed wrong when all these people, whose fault is merely the fact that their lives are defined by poverty, try desperately to reach countries where they believe the conditions of their existence could improve, only to meet hostile, and at times, barbaric and inhuman receptions.

In part, the United Nations is unable to fulfil some of the objectives set by the founders in San Francisco because, in truth, it does not reflect the expansion of the global family of free nations. Because this Organization of the peoples of the world has grown to encompass the entire world, many had

thought that it would be logical that this custodian of global democracy would itself serve as a beacon in our continuing quest for democracy in all our countries.

Clearly, for the United Nations to continue occupying its moral high ground, it has to reform itself urgently and lead by practical example, showing what it means to be democratic. Even as we face the cold reality of the indifference of many among the rich and powerful, this Organization of the peoples of the world has continued to offer hope and the possibility of the fulfilment of the aspirations of the majority of the peoples of the world.

All of us, including those who hesitate to implement the commonly agreed positions, agree that this Organization has entrenched the correct understanding that development is a right and is central to the advancement of humanity. All of us, individually and collectively and as Members of the United Nations, must do whatever is necessary to develop and implement policies and strategies aimed at the achievement of sustainable development. It is important that international organizations such as the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and others should, without any equivocation, seriously embark on the implementation of all the commitments that we have made as the international community.

This Organization of the peoples of the world cannot merely note the unacceptable situation that Africa will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We need further programmes, focused and concrete, to accelerate development in Africa and avoid the possibility of that continent sinking further into the morass of poverty and underdevelopment.

Because we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, we have the responsibility to end the rhetoric and implement programmes that ensure that all human beings live decent, humane and prosperous lives.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as my own country, South Africa, I take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the great work he did in steering this Organization during this past year as President of the General Assembly.

We are honoured to welcome Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and we wish her well in her important work. Madam President, we pledge to do whatever is necessary to make your work easier, so that through your efforts, the poor can regain full confidence in the ability of the United Nations to improve their conditions of life.

Every day the masses cry out in pain, frustration and anger. Every day they ask whether there is anybody who stops to hear their voices, anybody who listens and who is ready to respond to their heartfelt plea for the restoration of their dignity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: Madam President, on behalf of the European Union, I have the honour to address the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia; and also Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by congratulating you, Madam President, upon your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly. I also wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, whose input has been crucial to the United Nations reform process. We are confident that under

your wise leadership, Madam President, this session will turn out to be successful.

The European Union is deeply committed to the United Nations and to its comprehensive agenda promoting peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We want to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world. The European Union continues its close and loyal cooperation with the world Organization. Recent events in different parts of the world have proved once again that, 61 years after its establishment, an effective United Nations is needed more than ever.

Contrary to our shared ideals, the realities of war and violence have not passed away into history. Conflicts and terrorism continue to destroy the social and economic progress for which we are all striving. The recent tragic events that occurred in Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories have again demonstrated the need to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Sustainable peace in the Middle East and security for the people living there can be achieved only through a commitment to a peace process that leads to a viable independent Palestinian State living in peace with a secure Israel. That remains our goal. The European Union is determined to participate actively in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) in order to help consolidate the ceasefire and reach a long-term solution based on the terms contained in the resolution.

The European Union is strongly committed to respect of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel during conflict. We therefore condemn the deaths of hundreds of civilians in Lebanon and Israel in the recent conflict. We welcome the outcome of the Stockholm International Donor Conferences on the Humanitarian Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and on Lebanon. The European Union has responded swiftly and generously to both humanitarian appeals.

In the Middle East, we have demonstrated our continued, strong commitment to the United Nations. Peacekeepers from European Union countries are already deployed in the area and will form the backbone of the new United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) operation.

On this occasion, I want to pay tribute to the memory of the United Nations military observers and other personnel who recently fell victim to the war in southern Lebanon.

The European Union will continue active engagement in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the future. We see wide scope for further complementary and combined efforts with the United Nations as well as with other regional entities.

In sub-Saharan Africa, many peace agreements have been brokered with the help of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European Union remains greatly involved in assisting in the completion of the electoral process through a major financial contribution and the decisive support of the European Union military operation.

Unfortunately, in Darfur, the humanitarian and security situation is deteriorating. The European Union welcomes the recent Security Council resolution on the United Nations-led peacekeeping operation in the Sudan, and we strongly urge the Sudanese Government to give its consent to the deployment of the United Nations operation.

Peacebuilding is an integral part of the broad security concept. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission brings its own and much-needed contribution to United Nations work for peace and security. The European Union will work actively to ensure that this new body will have a strong and dynamic role in the United Nations system. Gender aspect is important in this context. We also welcome the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund to enhance the capability of the international community to respond to urgent humanitarian needs.

The events of the past year show that terrorism continues to threaten international peace and security. This threat can be effectively addressed through broad-based cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. The European Union welcomes the agreement on a global counter-terrorism strategy as an important instrument and expression of international solidarity in the fight against terrorism. The European Union urges United Nations Member States to build on this achievement and to intensify their efforts to reach a speedy consensus on a United Nations comprehensive counter-terrorism convention. We underline the importance of prevention and of conducting the fight

against terrorism in accordance with human rights, refugee law and international humanitarian law.

We consider it important that this session of the General Assembly should mark progress in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. Concrete action is needed on small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels. The European Union will continue to push for a legally binding treaty on trade in all conventional weapons.

Effective multilateralism is crucial in facing the growing threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council has a central role in addressing those threats. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 1695 (2006) on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We look forward to its effective implementation, and we strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement fully the requirements of this resolution.

The European Union also welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1696 (2006) and calls on Iran to respond positively and swiftly to the demands of the international community in implementing this resolution, in particular by suspending its enrichment activities in accordance with that resolution. This would pave the way for negotiations on a comprehensive agreement aimed at restoring confidence that the Iranian nuclear programme serves exclusively peaceful purposes. We welcome the current exploratory talks aimed to facilitate the opening of the negotiations. An increasingly important element in the promotion of global peace and security is the need to foster tolerance, mutual understanding and respect. In this regard, the European Union has already expressed its strong support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

Development builds peace. The United Nations and its Member States have created effective common goals for economic, social and environmental development. We must fulfil our common commitment to the global partnership for development with all stakeholders and implement all the Millennium Development Goals and other jointly agreed development targets in the time agreed on by Member States. In our view, every country has control over and primary responsibility for its own development.

The social dimension of globalization, including the importance of decent work for all, deserves special attention in the work of the United Nations. Ensuring decent work is not only about economic and social development and individual rights and standards. It is also very much a factor that contributes to the social and political stability of countries and regions.

We have seen positive development also in Africa. However sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is not on track to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Therefore, the European Union has decided to give 50 per cent of its increase in aid to Africa. We are willing to strengthen the strategic partnership with Africa by developing a joint strategy.

We also need to improve aid effectiveness and donor practices. The European Union is fully committed to implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and calls on all other donors to do the same. In addition, the international community must deliver real gains for poor countries on trade. Trade can be a strong catalyst for economic growth and poverty reduction. Thus trade is a key element to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda must be resumed, as their successful outcome will deliver substantial development benefits to developing countries. We urge quick implementation of the aid-for-trade commitments of December 2005.

The European Union welcomes the outcome of the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries held in New York this week. We are pleased that from 2001 onwards economic growth in the least developed countries (LDCs) as a group has almost reached the 7 per cent target. As the providers of the greatest net official development aid, we note with satisfaction the overall increase in official development assistance from donor countries, especially to LDCs.

Ensuring sustainable development is an urgent task. Environmental sustainability underpins long-term development and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss are integral parts of achieving sustainable development. For this purpose, the Montreal Action Plan on climate change agreed last year needs to be pushed forward urgently.

The Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence is about to finalize its work. The European Union looks forward to studying the Panel's recommendations, which could give an urgently needed global response, especially at the country level. This should be done in close cooperation with other multilateral stakeholders and the developing countries themselves.

The European Union looks forward to continuing cooperation in the field of migration and development after last week's High-level Dialogue. Migration is an integral part of the development agenda, and development is an important element in migration policies.

The European Union is committed to strengthening and mainstreaming human rights within the United Nations system. One of the major accomplishments of the United Nations has been the comprehensive framework of international human rights law. It sets out clear standards by which all States are measured. With a view to strengthening that framework, we attach great importance to the adoption of new instruments on enforced disappearances, the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of persons with disabilities during the present session of the General Assembly.

The newly established Human Rights Council has the potential to significantly strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world. The European Union wants to ensure that it lives up to that potential and that it soon plays a strong and dynamic role in the United Nations system. The Union has high expectations for the second regular session of the Council, which began yesterday.

The EU is also committed to ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. We strongly support the International Criminal Court (ICC) and call upon all States that are not yet party to the Rome Statute of the ICC to ratify or accede to it without delay.

The EU will continue to promote the rule of law both at the national level and in international relations. In Iraq, upholding the rule of law is a key challenge. The Union is working closely together with the United Nations and other partners to assist the Iraqi Government in that field.

The EU wishes to see this world Organization function in a more effective, transparent and accountable way. The EU recognizes the need to reform the main United Nations bodies, among them the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Management reform, as well as the mandates review, will be high on our agenda when we start our work this autumn. We need to continue our collective efforts through consensual decision-making. After all, United Nations reform will benefit the entire membership of the Organization.

Before I conclude, let me pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. For nearly 10 years, he has shown leadership and vision in his work to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as courage in the much-needed transformation of our world Organization. He has put a human face on the United Nations, both inside and outside the Organization. I wish him all the best.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Musharraf: I am indeed very happy to see a sister from fraternal Bahrain presiding over the General Assembly at this important session. Your election, Madam, symbolizes the increasingly significant role that women are playing in the Muslim world. You will have Pakistan's full support in carrying out your challenging responsibilities.

This is the first time that I have addressed this body since the devastating earthquake that occurred in the northern regions of Pakistan last October. I therefore take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude for the relief and financial assistance that we received from around the world. We were deeply moved by the global solidarity displayed in the hour of our distress and need.

Multilateral cooperation is the key to addressing the existing and emerging challenges of the twenty-first century: political disputes, terrorism, proliferation, poverty, hunger, disease, economic disparities, migration, unemployment, environmental degradation and natural disasters. We appreciate the Secretary-General's initiatives to equip the United Nations to respond to those challenges. But we are yet a distance from the vision endorsed at the 2005 United Nations Summit.

Over the past six years, despite daunting external and internal challenges, Pakistan has been transformed into a dynamic nation, moving rapidly towards the vision of our founder, namely, a modern, progressive, Islamic and democratic republic. We have reformed our institutions of governance and our economy. Democratic governance has been introduced at the grass-roots level. We are focusing on lifting up the underprivileged sectors of our society: poor people, women and minorities. Women are being politically and economically empowered and protected against discrimination. Minorities have been politically mainstreamed. We have also unshackled the media.

Having successfully put our economy on an upsurge, we are now embarked on second-generation reforms to spread the benefits of growth to all our people. One of our strategic aims is to utilize Pakistan's unique geostrategic position to build trade, energy and communication corridors linking South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and China. Regional integration will accelerate economic growth and prosperity in our part of Asia and even beyond. Of course, Pakistan still faces daunting challenges from within and without. We are facing them boldly to build an environment of peace and stability in our region.

Pakistan desires a peaceful environment in the region. We have been engaged in a peace process with India aimed at building confidence and resolving issues — including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute — that have been the source of tension and conflict between the two countries in the past. The improved relations and the conducive international environment have brought an acceptable solution to this long-standing dispute within reach. I am confident that my positive meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Havana will help to carry the peace process forward, which is vital for the future of both countries and for peace in South Asia and beyond.

A stable security environment is also important for peace in our region. Pakistan has proposed the creation of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia, encompassing minimum nuclear deterrence and a balance of conventional forces. We do not want to enter into an arms race. But we will do whatever is necessary to preserve the credibility of our minimum defensive deterrence level.

Pakistan has a legitimate requirement for nuclear power generation to meet the energy needs of our expanding economy and our expanding industry. As a responsible nuclear State, we will continue to seek nuclear technology for power generation under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. We cannot accept discrimination in the nuclear field.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital interest. It will assure tranquillity on our western frontiers. It will also enable Pakistan to realize its ambition of linking Central Asia and South Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan confronts complex security, political and economic challenges, including a resurgent Taliban that also threatens Pakistan's efforts to combat extremism and terrorism. The common challenge imposes a joint responsibility on Pakistan, Afghanistan and the coalition forces.

Problems in the border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan are compounded by the continuing presence in Pakistan of over 3 million Afghan refugees, some of them sympathetic to the Taliban. The incentives offered by the international community to the refugees for their voluntary return are minimal. A serious international commitment is required to facilitate their repatriation to their country.

The unfortunate history of our region has placed Pakistan in the frontline of the global campaign against terrorism. We cooperate daily with many countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom. Our cooperation has pre-empted several terrorist plots,

such as the one uncovered recently to blow up airliners flying from London. Over the past five years, Al-Qaida has been significantly degraded as an organization in our region.

While we confront terrorism our strategy must seek to eliminate this phenomenon comprehensively. We cannot do so unless we understand and address the root causes of terrorism today. How are terrorists able to find willing recruits, even among educated young people, in advanced and democratic societies? The reasons are clear. Across the Muslim world, old conflicts and new campaigns of military intervention have spawned a deep sense of desperation and injustice. Each new battleground involving an Islamic State has served as a new breeding ground for extremists and terrorists. Indiscriminate bombings, civilian casualties, torture, human rights abuses, racial slurs and discrimination only add to the challenge of defeating terrorism.

In my view, a two-pronged strategy, which I call enlightened moderation, is required to address the situation. That strategy envisages that, apart from combating terrorism frontally, the international community must undertake resolute efforts to resolve the conflicts afflicting the Islamic world. Unless we end the foreign occupation of Muslim countries and suppression of Muslim peoples, terrorism and extremism will continue to find recruits among alienated Muslims in various parts of the world.

We also need to bridge, through dialogue and understanding, the growing divide between the Islamic and Western worlds. In particular, it is imperative to end racial and religious discrimination against Muslims and to prohibit the defamation of Islam. It is most disappointing to see personalities of high standing oblivious to Muslim sensitivities at these critical moments.

The greatest challenge to global security, to the campaign against terrorism, to the promotion of harmony among civilizations and to the credibility of the United Nations is the cauldron of conflict that is the Middle East — exemplified by the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon. We hope that the resolution painstakingly brokered in the Security Council will lead to a rapid and complete Israeli withdrawal and the restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty over its entire territory.

The attack on Lebanon has far-reaching implications for the Middle East. The ability and relevance of moderate forces to bring about a just peace in the region has been put to a very severe test. The world must, however, still support them to address the festering problems of the region comprehensively and fairly. It is time to end Israel's conflicts with all its neighbours. It is time, first and foremost, to end the tragedy of Palestine. There is no doubt in our mind — there should be no doubt in anyone's mind — that that lies at the core not only of tackling the problems of Iraq and Afghanistan, but also of dealing with the menaces of terrorism and extremism at their roots.

The confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme threatens further instability in this already inflamed region. We are encouraged by the "Iran and 5 + 1" negotiations and believe that this issue can be resolved peacefully in a manner that accommodates the legitimate rights and interests of all parties involved. Resort to coercion and worse, the use of force, could lead to grave consequences in the region and globally.

The dynamic economic performance of several developing countries, especially in Asia, has transformed the world's geo-economic map. Yet, most developing countries find that international trade and financial structures are weighted against them. With the Doha Round in the doldrums, new modalities must be found so as to utilize the full potential of trade for development. Similarly, the international financial system should ensure a more equitable share of international liquidity and investment for developing countries.

Unless the activities of the United Nations accommodate the concerns and priorities of its general membership, the Organization risks losing its global moral authority. The General Assembly should reassert its Charter responsibilities, and the Security Council should be reformed to make the activities of the Council more democratic, transparent, inclusive and accountable to the general membership. The reform of the Security Council is of vital interest to every Member State and must therefore be adopted by consensus or by the widest possible agreement.

This important session of the Assembly will elect the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. Pakistan hopes that consensus will soon develop in the Security Council and the Assembly on a qualified candidate from Asia. Pakistan will extend its full

support to the new Secretary-General, as we have done to Mr. Kofi Annan, to build a United Nations that can decisively advance the world towards the noble vision of preventing the scourge of war and promoting better standards of living for all peoples of the world in freedom.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chirac (*spoke in French*): Lebanon has again been set ablaze by war, a further manifestation of the interminable conflict in the Middle East whose tragedies have, for 60 years now, punctuated the life of the United Nations.

By endlessly deferring its settlement, this confrontation has become the epicentre of international instability, the main source of incomprehension between the different worlds and an easy alibi for all forms of terrorism.

This situation is not a foregone conclusion. With Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), the United Nations is shouldering its responsibilities. The unanimous adoption of this resolution has brought the fighting to an end. France, Europe and Asia have contributed to the strengthening of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

But the fire is still smouldering. It is now up to all the parties to work towards the consolidation of peace and the recovery of Lebanon.

It is now up to Israel to complete the withdrawal of its forces. It is up to the Lebanese Government to affirm its sovereignty throughout its territory. And it is up to the countries in the region to cooperate fully in order to ensure the success of resolution 1701 (2006), to cooperate with the United Nations.

In this highly sensitive region where divides meet, the status quo has become unbearable. Because the conflict in the Middle East is a threat to global peace and security, the world has no option but to be the guarantor of peace. Let us tread off the beaten track of habit. Let us define a global strategy the key to which is an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

The parameters for that settlement are well-known, namely, the secure coexistence of two viable States, as has already been widely accepted by both peoples; safe and recognized borders; and a fair solution for refugees and for Jerusalem. All that still stands between Israelis and Palestinians and the peace to which they aspire is the deep-seated, mutual distrust of two peoples shattered by history and reeling from their sufferings and ordeals. Let us now stop extremists from laying down the law! Let us help peoples and leaders bold enough to seek peace! Like, before them, Sadat and Begin, Rabin and Arafat! Before this Assembly, I call on the world to commit itself to restoring the conditions for confidence.

The Quartet should meet shortly to start preparing an international conference. I propose that the conference define in advance the guarantees that we are prepared to provide to the parties as soon as they reach an agreement. I also propose that the conference pave the way for a new future in the Middle East through a regional framework for collective security, economic integration and dialogue among cultures.

Building peace means fighting terrorism. It means preventing proliferation. It means shouldering the "responsibility to protect" that we enshrined here last year.

International legality must prevail over the threats of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the crisis with Iran, confidence has been impaired by the existence of hidden programmes. We have extended ambitious offers of cooperation to that major country,

provided it restores confidence by suspending its contentious activities. Dialogue must prevail. Let us talk in order to enter into negotiations.

Given the seriousness of what is at stake, the international community must stand firm and united. We do not aim to call regimes into question. We aim to ensure security in accordance with international law and with due regard for the sovereignty of all countries.

The "responsibility to protect" — that was what we affirmed here. In Darfur, millions of people are threatened. A crime against humanity looms. Bloodshed and turmoil are about to convulse the very heart of Africa again.

France entreats the international community to ward off a further humanitarian catastrophe. I solemnly call on Sudan to accept the United Nations peace mission without delay. I call on the International Criminal Court to bring to justice those responsible for these crimes.

The time has come for the immense continent of Africa, with its wealth of peoples and vibrant youth, which has embarked on the road to growth and reform, to find, at long last, a destiny worthy of it and of the cradle of humanity it represents. Humanity must be united and there must be solidarity among its diverse peoples. Humanity needs, more than ever, a strong and respected United Nations, the irreplaceable tool for shared sovereignty and responsibility.

It is here that universal and sacred human rights must be defended and protected. With the new Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court, the United Nations returns to this primary vocation. Let us not disappoint the hopes of all those who love freedom and justice.

At a time when the world's wealth is increasing as never before, the separation between the rich and poor is becoming intolerable. From its inception, the United Nations has stood for the moral imperatives of fairness and solidarity. For this reason France wishes to submit to the United Nations the idea of innovative development financing mechanisms such as the international solidarity levy on airplane tickets, a modern, pragmatic and experimental response to the need to fight poverty and pandemics. In this spirit we will be launching the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) initiative this afternoon. Let us overcome selfishness and dogmatism and give the generous idea of a world united for human progress a chance.

Finally, we all know that uncontrolled human activity is bringing about a sort of slow collective suicide. Disaster can only be averted if nations can come together to support jointly agreed commitments. Let us create a United Nations for the environment, as the expression of the world's ecological conscience and the premier forum in which we take common action for future generations. France will host an international conference next year to bring together all those who want to make progress on this project, which is crucial to the future of the planet.

For 10 years now, a man has held high the torch of the United Nations and our universal values. Today, I wish to pay Kofi Annan the solemn and merited honour of our profound admiration, of our respect and of our recognition.

In a few weeks' time, we will appoint a new Secretary-General, who will be faced with immense challenges. He will be able to count on the support of France, on its unswerving commitment to serving peace and justice, fraternity and progress.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kaczyński (*spoke in Polish, English text provided by the delegation*): Let me begin by extending my congratulations to Her Excellency Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa from the Kingdom of Bahrain on the occasion of her election as President of the General Assembly in its sixty-first session. I wish you, Madam, every success in carrying out this important mission.

To the former President, His Excellency Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign Affairs from the Kingdom of Sweden, I convey my respect for his outstanding achievements in running the previous session.

I convey my best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. I would like to express my profound respect and full support for his incessant efforts in continuing to reduce international tension and resolve international conflicts.

The matters we have gathered here to discuss today are very important for the world, for Europe, for Poland and for me personally. I am saying this as President and as a member of Solidarity — the movement that completely changed my country.

Solidarity gave Poland her freedom and sovereignty, and also contributed to the fall of Communism in Europe. Thanks to Solidarity, a wall dividing the world into two hostile camps was brought down. We, the Poles, perceive global partnership for development — the theme of this year's session of the United Nations — through the lens of our historical experiences — the experiences of the Solidarity movement.

The Polish Solidarity movement originated from an idea that is a universal value in various cultures, religions and traditions. This value must be rediscovered in order to help build a new world based on the right of all nations and all peoples to live in dignity.

Poland's heritage is inextricably connected with the heritage of Europe — one that is founded on a respect for human rights and love of freedom.

Like many other countries over the course of history, we have experienced disasters like those that, unfortunately, continue to affect the everyday lives of millions of people on various continents. For many years, we suffered from wars, destruction, poverty, a lack of freedom and a loss of independence. Today, in a free country where we have been implementing essential reforms for more than a decade, we are making up for lost time. Although we sometimes make mistakes trying to improve on those reforms, we continue to make progress. We wish to share with others our experience of profound transformation.

Poland's experience in shaking off a totalitarian regime and taking up the task of modernizing the country gives us a special understanding of the needs of countries following a similar path. That is why we are committed to doing our utmost to spread democracy and freedom around the world. Today, Poland is a rapidly developing country. We are becoming a nation that is able to donate to the international community, much to our satisfaction. Until recently, we were the beneficiary of such aid. Indeed, I should like Poland to become even more active in that regard.

Today, in the twenty-first century, Poland is a strong sovereign State and an active member of the European Union, as well as an ally of the United States of America. Having overcome painful historical experiences, Poland has been developing friendly relations with its neighbours since 1989, opening a new chapter in its relations with Germany. We also want the best possible relationship with our great neighbour Russia. We are hopeful, yet sometimes concerned, about the developments in that country.

Poland, a member of the European Union for more than two years, supports the Union's approach to cooperation with the United Nations. We are convinced that peace must be built through long-term sustainable development. It is in that conviction that we take action in the United Nations with regard to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. We also support our eastern neighbours in their reform efforts. Poland, which paved the way for a market economy, the democratic rule of law and a civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, has extensive experience in those areas. We are prepared to share that experience further with countries that are transforming their economies and State institutions.

Together with our European partners, we are shaping the political, social and economic future of our continent. However, because Poland is aware that Europe is not the whole world, we are participating in stabilization and peacekeeping missions around the world, including those in Kosovo, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon and Iraq.

We strongly encourage efforts to bring a lasting peace to the Middle East. A few days ago, I had the opportunity to express Poland's position in that regard. Poland unequivocally supports Israel's right to live in security. At the same time, Poland supports the aspirations of the Palestinian nation to build an independent State. We have been involved in the stabilization of the region for many years. We actively participate in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Two weeks ago, at the request of the Secretary-General, we stated that we would increase our military contingent. If necessary, we will increase it even further.

For Poland, the difficult and painful period of our history belongs to the past. I wish to reiterate that our experiences have left us with a sense of moral obligation to help others. We want to repay our debt. Just as we once received support, we now want to support others.

In seeking to provide the most effective forms of assistance, the international community must take into account the phenomenon of globalization, which has become the challenge of the twenty-first century. Although it understandably gives rise to various emotions and extreme opinions, its significance is indisputable. Globalization has revealed the scale and the nature of problems of which we had not been fully aware. I am thinking about the ever-increasing inequalities and exclusion from the achievements of civilization and about the vast areas of poverty and instability that are breeding grounds for crime and increase the threats to peace and security.

It is also difficult not to fear the negative effects of globalization: the division of the world into countries that are becoming ever richer and those that are condemned to ever-deepening poverty. The response to these fears must be global solidarity. We can scarcely fail to see the dramatic contradiction between such poverty and the affluence made possible by incredible scientific and technological progress.

What is solidarity in the global context? Very briefly, it is the collective reaction against the emergence of new iron curtains and political, economic and cultural barriers; it is also respect for the dignity and the inalienable right to freedom of every human being throughout the world, regardless of culture, tradition or geographic location. Understood in that way, solidarity is a rational fight against poverty, carried out by encouraging a broad flow of assistance to the poorest countries through appropriately planned economic support. Assistance efforts must be undertaken in such a way as to ensure not only that they provide short-term relief, but also, and above all, that they permit long-term development. Thus, we should work out a reform programme to make such development possible.

Here, I should like to draw attention to the issue of energy security, which is increasingly important in many regions of the world. Energy security should be based on the diversification of energy sources and on the development of energy relationships that cannot be used as a means of political pressure.

Assistance provided in the context of global solidarity has an economic aspect. Freedom and respect for the rights of the individual are essential conditions for sustainable well-being. Assistance in the context of global solidarity also implies support for societies striving to achieve freedom, democracy and the protection of human rights — support that is provided with wisdom and that is sensitive to the cultural uniqueness, traditions and needs of each country.

I believe that where tensions and social conflicts are resolved through dialogue, where respect is promoted for different cultures and religions and where economic inequalities between societies and States are prevented, terrorism will not find soil in which to grow. I also wish to express my conviction that here and now, in the contemporary world, we must fight terrorism wherever it appears. In the long run, however, global solidarity may be the most effective weapon against those who would like to see the world as the scene of a never-ending fight.

The United Nations today needs specific programmes to realize ambitious visions founded on global solidarity and a global partnership for development. The United Nations must be more effective in ensuring equal development opportunities, thus closing the gap between the living standards of the North and of the South.

The United Nations is thus confronted with huge tasks, which require both high-minded commitment and reforms. We want changes that adapt the United Nations to contemporary challenges. The world is constantly changing, and the United Nations must keep pace with those changes. Only thus can it preserve its significance and multiply its great achievements.

Reforms must be focused on the human being, thus defending human rights and freedoms and opening the way to well-being and spiritual development for all. Those were the founding values of the United Nations over 60 years ago.

Poland advocates such a reform of the Organization and is ready to participate in it. Poland also wishes to participate in a restructuring of international relations that would be based to a greater extent on the principles of solidarity and assistance extended by wealthy nations to nations in need. In other words, the quantity of such support should be significantly greater than it is now.

These words of that great Pole, Pope John Paul II, the spiritual father of Polish solidarity, can be our guiding beacon: "Man is great not through what he owns, but through what he is; not through what he has, but through what he shares with others."

We are facing tremendous challenges. We can tackle them only by acting in solidarity through global partnership. May our efforts be inspired by solidarity, a principle embodied in a word that appears in all the world's languages — and in many of them it sounds very much the same.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.